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SUBJECT: EGYPT: TIP ISSUES UPDATE

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Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

11. (SBU) Summary: This summer we have seen modest but genuine GOE progress on TIP. The GOE has announced the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee to combat TIP in Egypt. People's Assembly (PA) representative Georgette Qellini announced in June that she would introduce a draft law when Parliament reconvenes in November seeking to institute harsher punishments for those found guilty of TIP. Finally, the GOE has initiated a public awareness campaign airing a UN-produced public service announcement (PSA) on trafficking several times a day on state-owned and operated Egyptian television. End summary.

12. (SBU) A July 15 Prime Ministerial decree formally established a "National Committee to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons." (Senior MFA officials had first previewed this committee for us in late 2006.) NGO activists have told us they expect that the bulk of the committee's work will be shared by the Ministries of Justice and the Interior, which traditionally have had the lead for combating trafficking in Egypt. The July 15 decree noted that the Committee's responsibilities will include: submitting annual reports on the status of efforts to combat TIP to the GOE's Council of Ministers; drafting a national plan of action to prevent TIP in Egypt; coordinating with international bodies such as the United Nations; drafting anti-TIP legislation; and building anti-TIP capacity through educational, judicial, and general awareness programming. Egypt's official wire service and the largest independent daily, Al Masry Al Youm, published prominent articles covering the decree. Working level officials at both the Public Prosecutor's Office and the MFA told us that the Committee's first formal meeting will occur in early September.

13. (SBU) Separately, PA member Georgette Qellini told us that she presented a draft law in June to the People's Assembly which seeks to impose harsher penalties on those convicted of human trafficking crimes. The new law includes punishment by "temporary hard labor" for any individual found to be trafficking a child younger than sixteen years of age. If the person convicted of trafficking a minor is a relative or guardian, or if the victim is a female, the draft law proposes that a life sentence of hard labor should be imposed. The law also seeks to punish anyone who receives services from TIP victims, including a sentence of temporary hard labor for "the buyer." Qellini said her draft law, in addition to major revisions to the children's protection law, will be considered by the PA when it reconvenes in November.

14. (SBU) In early July, state-owned Egyptian television began airing UN-produced public service announcements on labor trafficking during prime time broadcasts. As the result of direct advocacy by NCCM Director Ambassador Mushira

Khattab, the head of ETV, Suzanne Hassan, agreed to air the spots free of charge in order to raise public awareness effort about TIP. Media monitoring indicated that the spots were aired throughout the day, most notably before and after evening news programs, serials and popular prime-time talk shows.

15. (SBU) Comment: The GOE has used the "blue-ribbon commission" approach to tackle various controversial issues, including gender issues and human rights. The new committee is solid evidence that GOE realizes that a more robust approach to TIP in Egypt is needed. NCCM's work with ETV to broadcast the trafficking PSAs is also an important step, abetted by the Embassy's PA section which placed the UN-produced PSAs with NCCM. Similarly, the fact that the People's Assembly is scheduled to consider the revised child protection law (as well as the related proposal, submitted by PA member Qellini, for increased penalties for TIP) beginning in November can also be seen as an additional opportunity for progress.

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